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A PRIVATE HAND.

MANY of us are old enough to remember the importance, the excitement, the dash of mystery belonging to a foreign letter in years gone by, in the pre-penny-post period of epistolary communication. The foreign letter was not embellished with a stamp; indeed, stamps were as yet dormant in the inventive brain of Sir Rowland Hill, and letters were still besmeared with red-ink cabalistic characters, like the signatures of Faustus to weird contracts; the paper was thin; and the handwriting was crooked, and in some instances recrossed. The cause of this thinness of paper and economy of space was, of course, the excessive dearth of postage. A letter from France to England cost elevenpence; a letter from England to France cost from threepence to sixpence more, as if that route were an uphill one. As for Italy, Germany, and Russia, not to mention the Levant, an unfortunate epistle had to pay a ransom equalling many times its own weight in silver, ere it reached its destination. Then came a grand bloodless revolution. Napoleon Hill introduced a new set of tactics, different in principle from the old-world theory of making the transit of letters as costly as possible, and the antique system was abolished.

Of course, Theodore Hook, the great satirist of the day, when people's taste in satirical novels was not the most discriminating, wrote against cheap postage, as he did against railways and other noxious novelties. Of course, the expected avalanche of documents was destined to overturn the constitution, ruin the roads, demoralise the people, and fire the Thames. Yet it was tried, and it has answered fairly, and done infinite good. Foreign nations took to it, one by one, and the original red or azure portrait of her Britannic Majesty was imitated abroad: blue kings, and black grand dukes, and green sovereign princes, and yellow emperors, began to decorate with their bearded or moustached likenesses the humble correspondence of their subjects. Then free-trade principles were adopted, postage was gradually lowered, and it was found that mankind, and womankind especially, preferred writing ten penny letters rather than one sixpenny one, and the tide of pen-and-ink communication rose like a black (and white) sea. But, cheapen postage as kings and kaisers might, there was one thing beyond their power: they might increase correspondence, but they could not get rid of the smuggler. Now, the smuggler of letters was quite a peculiar scion of the great Contraband family, and his origin was naturally deduced from the ancient law which demanded a toll of one franc on a letter bound from Paris to London; one franc and six sous

on a letter voyaging in a contrary direction. This unreasonable tariff produced the smuggler, just as Lord Barleycorn's pheasant-crowded preserves exert a magnetic influence over poachers. Even when the tariff was lowered gradually, and French and Belgian postages dropped to fourpence, it was found that habit was stronger than reason, and the letter-smuggler a weed of tenacious root.

So it is at present. The oddest, the most unlikely people smuggle across the frontiers the epistles of their friends, of the friends of their friends, and of the acquaintances of these latter, even to the remotest ramifications. Let us take Boulogne-sur-Mer for an example, though, indeed, almost any other port would do as well, and contemplate the extent of what may be called literary contrabandism that goes on, at the arrival and departure of every packet-boat. Yonder, in Boulogne harbour, lies the good steamer *Empress Eugénie*, her cabins crammed to suffocation point, and her decks swarming with homeward-bound Britons of both sexes, and all ages. There they are, the bachelor-tourists, elaborately got up with checked suits, and couriers' money-bags, and shapeless felt hats; with *Alpenstocks* in their hands, and French varnish on their boots; and there is honest Paterfamilias, dusty and crumpled of garb, and a little ruffled of temper, and lean as to purse, perhaps, but looking hale and healthy after his trip; and Materfamilias, worthy creature, still true to her Paisley shawl, and fathomless reticule, and sensible walking-boots, although her daughters are as radiant and flimsy of attire as Paris could make them. Yet what a strange thing is it to reflect, that scarcely one of this motley group is absolutely guiltless on the score of letter-smuggling, at the request of some acquaintance left behind in one of the many towns where British exiles are trying to make a guinea do the work of two. Yonder youth, in a black and white suit, like a magpie, with the leathern money-bag, the mandarin hat, crushed out of all shape by long travelling in sleep-provoking *Ellwagens* and diligences, he who caresses so lovingly the moustache of six weeks' growth that adorns his upper lip, and which, I fear, he will have to cut off before returning to his desk in detested Lothbury—he is a smuggler. I don't allude to the pound of cheap cigars, so cleverly stowed away at the bottom of his bulging carpet-bag; nor to the four pair of kid-gloves in his hat-box; nor even to the embroidered shirts, which he is convinced he has concealed in a manner inscrutable to human ken beneath the coats and old guide-books, and last month's *Illustrations*, at the bottom of his portmanteau—these are bagatelles of which it would

require a very bilious and cross-grained custom-house officer to unravel the mysteries; but what right had the foolish young man to deposit nineteen letters, neatly addressed, sealed, and stamped, in that absurd electro-plated dressing-case of his? And, as I live, he has six more in the inner breast-pocket of his coat, and two or three in the lining of his mandarin hat, the which fall to the deck, and cover him with confusion, as he makes a polite bow to his acquaintances, the Misses Screwwinton, who wave him an adieu from the pier-head. There are other delinquents on the deck of that homeward-bound craft. One of them is a Quaker—not an old-world Quaker, that could be recognised at a glance, but a modernised Friend, in trim drab of a nineteenth-century cut, and whose hat-rib is not much wider than those which worldlings affect. How sad to think that in the pockets of Friend Ephraim's glossy drab garments, in the innermost nooks of Friend Ephraim's shining leather valise, lurk certain epistles, each of which means to defraud the majesties of Britain and of France out of a fraction of fourpence! Only a fraction, after all, for each of these letters is duly adorned with a penny Queen's head, and will, on being deposited in a British letter-box, suddenly become a reputable letter, and pay its way henceforth throughout the Queen's dominions. Moreover, when it is considered that every stamp bought abroad, in any town or city you please to name, costs the purchaser three-halfpence for the stationer's emolument, it will be seen that the actual saving on a legal postage-rate of fourpence is but a twopenny-halfpenny profit after all. Yet folks will persevere in the old custom. Ephraim and young Mr Augustus Jinks are not the only sinners on board. Will Watch the smuggler is a Proteus that can take all manner of forms. Behold that quiet motherly old lady, so comfortable in her gray mantle and Shetland veil, and that old cozy muff. Ah! but what if I tell you that in that muff is the contraband correspondence of a whole colony of widows, spinsters, out-at-elbows colonels, and dubious captains, resident in some many-gabled town of Flanders or Normandy—what would be your opinion of poor old Mrs Graymantle then? Yet it is scarcely fair for the strictest moralist to censure her, poor soul! for she has not the faintest idea that she is a wrong-doer, and this is probably the only transgression of law that she has indulged in through her sixty years of rational existence; and, moreover, public opinion, in her town, decidedly called on Mrs Graymantle to load herself with this illicit rustling cargo of hers.

In such towns, the English are poor and pennywise to a degree scarcely credible; and when a pilgrim sets off for the chalky cliffs of Albion, the news flies far and wide, and all the dowagers, and elderly maidens, and broken-down dandies, and descendants of Brian Boru, betake themselves to pen and paper, and intrust the fruits of their toil to Mrs Graymantle. And Mrs Graymantle must be a very hard-hearted ogress, indeed, to refuse. Let her pass scot-free; there are bigger fish in the net than she. Behold, a monster smuggler—Will Watch on a wholesale footing. That tall bold-eyed man who has just come on board, with the cloak, and the black moustache and whiskers, so well grown, well trimmed, oiled, waxed, and lustrous, that poor Jinks sighs as he enviously eyes them, is the individual alluded to. He is well, but foppishly dressed—a little too theatrically, perhaps, but you see by his braided coat and cap that he is an official person. That is Colonel Thistle-down, the Queen's messenger, fresh from Paris, or Vienna, or Constantinople very probably, and whose whole life is spent in locomotion. He is hurrying up to the Foreign Office; and see, there are the bags, the sacred bags, which must never be lost sight of, and which have served the colonel for a pillow after many a day's hard galloping in the railwayless

East. The passengers cluster round, and admire the cloak, and the furred boots, and the laced cap, and their fearless wearer, and the monstrous bags, with the awful official seals, like great red pancakes, that guard the treasures within. Ah! but what is within, under the protection of those emblazoned lions and unicorns, seals that for his very life no custom-house Paul Pry dare meddle with? What do the bags contain? State-papers, of course, ominous protocols, grisly ultimatums, frank Imperial letters, eloquent diplomatic circulars, destined to soothe or to galvanise Europe. These, no doubt, but something else besides; for if the solid Spanish leather were suddenly transformed into glass, we should see Mrs Jones's letters to her cousin, in Portman Square, and old Lady Lilliacrap's shaky communication to the lawyer who conducts that undying Chancery suit against her two sisters and seven nephews and nieces, jostling the regular Downing Street documents. That blotted scrawl, addressed to a sporting attorney, and manifestly in the handwriting of my twice-ruined acquaintance Lord Fred Spatterdash, can scarcely be a legitimate official communication. And see the directions of the rest—to Mrs Buckram, to Lady Susan Spinnet, to Miss Crump of Bath! What, in the name of mystery and man-traps, can the British ambassador possibly have to impart officially to Mrs Buckram, Lady Susan Spinnet, and Miss Crump of Bath? Alas! there are many families of British residents abroad who look to the ambassadorial dispatch-bag as to a birthright of their own, and who would feel themselves robbed and injured if they were not allowed to send and receive letters, lace, silk, and specially contraband little luxuries, under cover of the inviolable V. R., and the guardian lion and unicorn. One would scarcely scold the *attaches* for writing home to their mamas in this frugal manner; but, really, this does push privilege a *leetle* too far. But, call the next case.

Yon dingy man with the flashy necktie, the fine waistcoat, the considerable display of jewellery, real or mock, and the half-military, half-sporting *tourneur*, is a smuggler too. That you are scarcely surprised to hear. It is the lightest of Captain Crusher's peccadilloes. The captain is redolent of cheap tobacco and cheap brandy; his moustache bespeaks the officer, perhaps; but you read courts-martial, horse-whippings, debts, drink, capias, all sorts of shame and degradation in that hang-dog, scowling eye of his. He is probably an outlaw, and only ventures over to England, on some bad errand most likely, because his creditors know he is not worth arresting. Yet the captain, who comes from the same town as respectable Mrs Graymantle, though they are only nodding acquaintances, has been intrusted with a dozen letters, which he is as likely to lose, or carry back again, as not.

But if we are not to wonder at the laxity of Captain Crusher's principles, where the postmaster-general is concerned, surely we have a right to marvel at this tall, thin, clerical gentleman, the Rev. Giles Flintworthy, chaplain presiding over that pretty little white chapel in the Rue Louveteau, at Paris. Mr Flintworthy is eminently respectable, which is more than can be said for all the Anglican divines abroad; he has no English living under sequestration, never having been benefited at all; and we may be sure that his character is as spotless as the driven snow, or some of the lady part of his congregation would have certainly discovered the 'something against him' long ago. And indeed he is a good man, who gives away a good deal more out of his meagre pew-rents than many pleasanter-mannered folks, and preaches the most beautiful sermons, and is terribly severe upon all petty sins, omissions, commissions, social fictions, and white lies. How sad that such a man should have a packet of smuggled letters in his pocket, the inner breast-pocket of his tight black coat, sheltered by that insidious cambric handkerchief, the very handkerchief which he is apt

to exhibit in the pulpit, in rather an ostentatious manner, perhaps, when weeping over our misdeeds! Sad, is it not?

I know that young Squire Rattler has a brace of unlawful documents about him, but that is because he is such a good-natured fellow, and carries his heart on his sleeve, so to speak. I saw an Englishman of raffish aspect step up to Rattler on the quay, just as he was handing his *permis d'embarquement* to the sallow gendarme at the top of the steam-boat ladder, and beg him to take charge of two most valuable letters, and to post them personally. Rattler stuffed them into his pocket, and thought no more about it. He will find them again to-morrow or next day; and the precious epistles will bear the stamp of 'Melton Mowbray,' or 'Doncaster,' according to the season. This is not uncommon. Total strangers—and Rattler did not know the man from Adam—are constantly beset on Calais or Boulogne piers, or say the Digue of Ostend, by confiding unknowns, who beseech them, by the tie of a common nationality, to smuggle letters for them. Rattler is a careless, easy-going fellow; and if he were caught and fined, he has plenty of bank-paper in his pocket-book, which might as profitably go to replenish her Majesty's exchequer as be won by the amiable fraternity of black-legs on the double event.

But that venerable gentleman who nestles by the boiler, under the lee of the pile of luggage, has apparently more silver on his head than in his purse, to judge by his well-brushed, well-worn coat, his tenderly treated hat, and shabby gloves. He looks, with his fresh pinkish face, white hair, and clean stiff shirt-collar, just the man Crabbe sang about—

A wise, good man, contented to be poor.

Alas! he, too, has smuggled letters in his possession: eight, ten, twelve, fifteen of them, I grieve to say. True, he does not get a farthing by his breach of law; but just imagine his state of mind if detected and amerced in the full penalty of L.50 per letter, or hard labour in default! And then what a pity to see a man of reverend age setting such an example to his juniors—a smuggler with one foot in the grave!

After the detection of this patriarch in his secret malpractices, we view the rest of the passengers with jaundiced eyes. Even infancy does not escape our suspicions; the little Miss Marys and little Master Gussies come in for darksome looks. Young and guileless creatures, playing hide-and-seek around your elders, or racing over a clear strip of deck, are you, too, breakers of the law? Is Miss Mary's tiny crinoline wadded with smuggled correspondence? and are there a score of non-paying documents in the pockets of Master Gussy's blue velvet knickerbockers? Then there are the steamer's crew and officers; but here we are approaching delicate ground. The captain would not smuggle, I grant you that, for his character and shrewd sense prevent it, and a packet-boat command is too snug a berth for an old naval lieutenant likely to risk it. The stokers don't smuggle, for who would intrust any epistles, even the most dubious, to their black paws? But the steward!—O dear me!—the steward is just the man that designing people would select as a transmarine Ganymede. It would be so charmingly simple for those rather numerous exiles who dwell within sight, in clear weather, of their native coasts, to arrange with the steward to carry letters both ways, for a small gratuity, or even a monthly salary, and so save an infinity of twopence-halfpennies! I am only hinting at what *might* occur; stewards have such facilities; and may not inland exiles run down to the pier, slip on board by special permission of the Argus-eyed gendarme at the ladder-head, and insinuate the miscreants into Brown or Thompson's den, among the clinking tumblers, and porter-bottles, and basins, and hard biscuits?

Do not any of these exemplary people, temporarily law-breakers, ever get found out? Is Justice purblind on both sides of the briny Channel? or is the net of Themis so large-meshed a structure, that such petty minnows as these inevitably slip through unharmed? You would not think it, to read the statutes in such case made and provided, especially among our Gallic neighbours. Go up to a French post-office, and read the colossal edicts there exhibited, all duly stamped with the eagle of empire, in the name of Napoleon III., regular as the laws of Darius. There you will peruse such threats against unlicensed carriers of letters as would make a mild man's hair stand on end; and though our own government is less awfully menacing than that of our illustrious ally, and only promises crank and hair-cropping to those who cannot pay a fine of L.50; yet its denunciations are sufficiently stern, one would think, to scare those strayed sheep—the economists of twopence-halfpenny—back into the legal path of fourpenny exactitude. It is a pity that the practice exists, and the good-humoured forbearance of the custom-house officers at Dover and Folkestone merits to be met in a more generous spirit. That L.50 fine will not be hastily enforced, we may be sure, except against some hardened and mercenary offender, some rogue who smuggles not for kindness, but for profit; and blind, indeed, have been the searchers to many and many an evasion of law. Even when letters are taken away, they are generally dropped into no more penal gulf than the nearest post-office affords, and a mild reproof is kindly substituted for the heavy mulct the letter of the law demands. But yet it is a pity, for so pitiful a saving, to break the laws of our country, and run a heavy risk of disgrace and punishment, lest a friend should pay twopence-halfpenny. Probably a light fine, promptly and rigorously enforced, would put an end to the offence without seriously harming the offenders; but that is the business of her Majesty's Attorney-general; and Sir Richard Bethell may act as he thinks fit in the matter; but if there is fairness, common sense, common honour and honesty in our countrymen and countrywomen abroad, surely they will learn to give up that paltry twopence-halfpenny, and smuggle letters no more.

THE WILD HUNTRESS.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.—OLD MEMORIES AWAKENED.

THE rein dropped from her hands—the rifle fell upon the neck of her horse, and she sat gazing at me in speechless surprise. At length, in a low murmur, and as if mechanically, she repeated the words:

'My sister Lillian!'

'Yes, Marian Holt—your sister.'

'My name! how can you have known it? You know my sister?'

'Know her, and love her—I have given her my whole heart.'

'And she—has she returned your love?'

'Would that I could say surely yes! Alas! I am still in doubt.'

'This is strange. O sir, tell me who you are! I need not question what you have said. I perceive that you know my sister—and who I am. It is true: I am Marian Holt—and you? you are from Tennessee?'

'I have come direct from it.'

'From the Obion? perhaps from?'

'From your father's clearing on Mud Creek, Marian.'

'Oh! this is unexpected—what fortune to have met you, sir! You have seen my sister?'

'I have.'

'How long has it been since you saw her?'

'Scarcely a month.'

'So lately! And how looks she? She is well?'
'How looks she?—Beautiful, Marian, like yourself. She was well, too, when I last saw her.'

'Dear Lillian!—how glad I am to hear she is well; and beautiful I know she is—very, very beautiful. Ah! me—they said I was so too, but my good looks have been lost in the wilderness. A life like that I lead soon takes the softness from a girl's cheeks. But, Lillian! O sir! tell me of her! I long to hear of her—to see her. It is but six months, and yet I think it six years, since I saw her. Oh! how I long to fold my arms around her! to twine her beautiful golden hair around my fingers, to gaze into her blue innocent eyes!'

My heart echoed the longings.

'Sweet little Lillian! Ah—little—perhaps not, sir? She will be grown by this? A woman like myself?'

'Almost a woman.'

'Tell me, sir—did she speak of me? Oh, tell me—what said she of her sister Marian?'

The question was put in a tone that betrayed anxiety. I did not leave her to the torture of suspense; but hastily repeated the endearing expressions which Lillian had uttered in her favour.

'Good kind Lil! I know she loves me as I do her—we had no other companions—none I may say for years, only father himself. And father—is he well?'

There was a certain reservation in the tone of this interrogatory, that contrasted strangely with that used when speaking of her sister. I well knew why.

'Yes,' I replied, 'your father is also well.'

There was a pause that promised embarrassment—a short interval of silence. A question occurred to me that ended it.

'Is there no one else about whom you would desire to hear?'

I looked into her eyes as I put the question. The colour upon her cheeks went and came like the changing hues of the chameleon. Her bosom rose and fell in short convulsive breathings; and despite an evident effort to stifle it, an audible sigh escaped her.

The signs were sufficient. I needed no further confirmation of my belief. Within that breast was a souvenir, that in interest far exceeded the memories of either sister or father. The crimson flush upon her cheek, the quick heaving of the chest, the half-hindered sigh, were evidence, palpable and pronounced. Upon the heart of Marian Holt was the image of the handsome hunter—Frank Wingrove—graven there, deeply and never to be effaced.

'Why do you ask that question?' at length she inquired in a voice of assumed calmness. 'Know you anything of my history? You appear to know all. Has any one spoken of me?'

'Yes—often—one who thinks only of you.'

'And who, may I ask, sir, takes this single interest in a poor outcast maiden?'

'Ask your own heart, Marian! or do you wish me to name him?'

'Name him!'

'Frank Wingrove.'

She did not start. She must have expected that name, since there was no other to be mentioned. She did not start, though a sensible change was observable in the expression of her countenance. A slight darkling upon her brow, accompanied by a pallor and compression of the lips, indicated pain.

'Frank Wingrove,' I repeated, seeing that she remained silent.

'I know not why I should have challenged you to name him,' said she, still preserving the austere look. 'Now that you have done so, I regret it. I had hoped never to hear his name again. In truth, I had well-nigh forgotten it.'

I did not believe in the sincerity of the assertion. There was a slight tincture of bravado in the tone that belied it. It was the lips alone that were speaking, and not the heart.

It was fortunate that Wingrove was not within earshot. The speech would have slain him.

'Ah, Marian!' I said appealingly, 'he has not forgotten yours.'

'No—I suppose he mentions it with boasting.'

'Say rather with bewailing.'

'Bewailing? Indeed! That he did not succeed in betraying me?'

'Far otherwise—he has been true to you.'

'It is false, sir; you know not, perhaps, that I was myself witness of his base treachery? Saw him?'

'What you saw was a mere accidental circumstance, nor was it of his seeking. It was the fault of the Chicasaw, I can assure you.'

'Ha! ha! ha! An accidental circumstance,' rejoined she, with a contemptuous laugh; 'truly a rare accident! It was guilt, sir. I saw him with his arms around her—with my own eyes I saw it. What further proof needed I of his perfidy?'

'You saw that, I know; but—'

'More than saw it: I heard of his faithlessness. Did not she herself declare it—in Swampville—elsewhere?—boasted of it even to my own sister! More still: another was witness to his vile conduct—had often seen him in her company. Ha! little dreamed he, while dallying in the woods with his redskinned squaw, that the earth has ears and the trees have tongues. The deceiver did not dream of that!'

'Fair Marian, they are foul calumnies; and whoever has given utterance to them did so to deceive you. Who, may I ask, was that other witness who has so misled you?'

'Oh! it matters not now—another villain like himself—one who—O God! I cannot tell you the horrid history—it is too fearfully black to be believed.'

'Nay, tell it me. I half know it already; but there are some points I wish explained—for your sake—for Wingrove's—for the sake of your sister'—

'My sister! how can it concern her? Surely it does not? Explain your meaning, sir?'

I endeavoured to avoid the look of earnest inquiry that was turned upon me. I was not yet prepared to enter upon the explanation.

'Presently,' I said, 'you shall know all that has transpired since your departure from home; but first tell me of yourself. You have promised me? I ask it not from motives of idle curiosity. I have freely confessed to you my love for your sister. It is that has brought me here—it is that which impels me to question you.'

'All this is mystery to me,' replied the huntress, with a look of extreme bewilderment. 'Indeed, sir, you appear to know all—more than I—but in regard to myself, I believe you are disinterested, and I shall willingly answer any question you may put to me. Go on! I shall conceal nothing.'

'Thanks!' said I. 'I think I can promise you that you will have no reason to regret your confidence.'

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

PLAYING CONFESSOR.

I was not without suspicion as to the motive of her complaisance; in fact, I understood it. Despite the declamatory denial she had given to its truth, my defence of Wingrove, I saw, had made an impression upon her. It had no doubt produced pleasant reflections; and rendered myself indirectly an object of gratitude. It was natural that such kindness should be reciprocated.

My own intent in 'confessing' the girl was twofold. First, on Wingrove's account—for notwithstanding all that had been said and done, her love for him *might have passed*. If so, instead of that happy reunion of two loving hearts, which I had anticipated bringing about, I should be the witness of a most painful interview.

Who could read the secrets of a woman's heart? Who trace it through all its eccentric inclinations? A heart, too, like hers—proud and impassible to the ordinary emotions of our nature. It had been rudely chafed. How knew I but that the blow which her love had received had dethroned it for ever?

I could not think so; and I was desirous of being certain; and the certainty would be easily obtained.

This, however, was but a secondary object. Of more importance was my other purpose—since it bore directly upon the fate of Lilian—the probable peril in which she was placed. It was the strange story of the trapper that was embittering my thoughts. Was the account true? Marian alone could contradict or confirm it.

Without further delay, I entered upon the theme. Alas! it was true to the letter!

'And did your father force you to this marriage?'

The answer was given hesitatingly.

'He did.'

'For what reason, do you know?'

'I could never tell—the man had some power over him, but how or in what way, I knew not then, nor do I now. My father told me it was a debt—a large sum which he owed him, and could not pay. I know not whether it was that. I hope it was.'

'You think, then, that Stebbins used some such means to force your father's consent?'

'I am sure of it. My father told me as much. He said that by marrying Stebbins, I could save him from disgrace; and entreated, rather than forced me to it. You know, sir, I could not ask why: he was my father. I do think that it was not his wish that I should have that man; but something threatened him.'

'Did your father know it was a false marriage?'

'No, no; I can never think that. I am sure the villain deceived him, as he did me. Oh! father could never have done so! People, I believe, thought him wicked, because he was short with them, and used rough language; but he was not wicked. Something had crossed him; and he drank. He was at times unhappy, and perhaps ill-tempered with the world; but never with us. He was always kind to sister and myself—never scolded us. Ah! no, sir; I can never think he knew that.'

'He knew that Stebbins was a Mormon—did he not?'

'I have tried to believe that he did not, though Stebbins afterwards told me so.'

I well knew that he did, but said nothing.

'His saying so,' continued she, 'proves nothing. If father did know of it, I am sure he was ignorant of the wickedness of these people. There were stories about them; but there were others who contradicted these stories, and said they were all scandal—so little does the world know what is true from what is false. I learned afterwards that the very worst that was said was even less than the truth.'

'Of course, you knew nothing of his being a Mormon?'

'O sir, how could I? There was nothing said of that. He pretended he was emigrating to Oregon, where a good many had gone. Had I known the truth, I should have drowned myself rather than have gone with him!'

'After all, you would not have obeyed your father's will in the matter, had not something else arisen. At his solicitation, you gave your consent; but were you not influenced by the incident that had occurred in the forest glade?'

'I have said I would conceal nothing! On discovering the falsehood of him who had told me he loved me, I was more than mad—I was revengeful. I will not deny that I felt spite. I scarcely cared what became of me—else how could I have consented to marry a man, for whom I had neither love nor liking? On the contrary, I might almost say I loathed him.'

'And you loved the other? Speak the truth, Marian! you have promised to do so—you loved Frank Wingrove?'

'I did.'

A deep-drawn sigh followed the confession.

'Once more speak the truth—you love him still?'

'Oh! if he had been true—if he had been true!'

'If true, you could love him still?'

'Yes, yes!' replied she, with an earnestness not to be mistaken.

Happy Marian! From what perils you have escaped! You have crossed the stormy sea, and know not how near is your haven of perfect bliss. Would that Lilian was alike delivered from danger!

Shall I disclose to her the terrible situation of her sister? Not yet, not yet! Before that cloud comes, let her enjoy one gleam of sunshine.

'Love him, then, Marian! love him still! Frank Wingrove is true!'

I detailed the proofs of his loyalty from beginning to end. I had learned every circumstance from Wingrove himself, and was able to set them forth with all the circumstantiality of truth itself. I spoke with as much earnestness, as if I had been suing in my own cause; but I was listened to with willing ears, and my suit was successful. I even succeeded in explaining that *sinister kiss*, that had been the cause of so much misfortune.

To describe the reunion of the lovers, is beyond the power of my pen. I could not describe it, for I saw it not. Behind the white tilt, it took place, unseen by me, but no doubt to the bewilderment of the wounded 'infantry,' who, with open mouth and wondering eyes, lay sheltered under the shadow of the wagon.

A moment after, I ascended the sloping path to the summit of the butte. My purpose was to see whether the Utahs were yet returning from the pursuit. I first looked back below. The reunited lovers were no longer by the mound. They had dismounted; and, side by side, passed onward to the bank of the stream. There stood they—handsome hunter and beautiful huntress—face to face, and bending towards each other in an attitude that betokened the perfect beatitude of both!

CHAPTER LXXXV.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS.

I might, without blame, have envied them those sweet throbbings of the heart, so different from my own. Widely different—since mine beat with the most painful pulsations.

The cloud which had fallen upon it by the revelations of the Mexican, had been further darkened by the details that confirmed them; and now that the excitement of the conflict was over, and I had an opportunity to reflect upon the future with comparative coolness, the agony of my soul became more concentrated and keen.

I scarcely felt joy that my life was saved; I almost wished that I had perished by the hands of the Indians!

The strange story of the trapper, now fully corroborated by its own heroine—with the additional facts obtained from herself—were only partially the cause of the horrid reflections that now passed before my mind. Indeed, they were enough of themselves to produce emotions sufficiently painful. I could have but one belief about the intention of Stebbins; and that was, that the base wretch was playing procurator to his despot master, doubtless to serve some ends of self-advancement; for it is well known that such are the titles to promotion in the Mormon hierarchy. With the experience of her sister fresh before my mind, I could have no other thought than that Lilian, too, was being led like a lamb to the sacrifice.

And how was this sacrifice to be stayed? How was the sad catastrophe to be hindered?

It was in the endeavour to answer these interrogatories that I felt my feebleness—the utter absence of strength.

Had it been a mere question of overtaking the caravan, there would have been no need for the slightest uneasiness. It would still be many days—weeks, indeed—before the north-going train could arrive at its destination; and if my apprehensions as to the design of Stebbins were well founded, Lillian would be in no danger until after her arrival in the so-called 'Mormon city.' It was there—within the walls of that modern Gomorrah—upon a shrine consecrated to the mockery of every moral sentiment, that the sacrifice of virtue was to be offered up—there was it that the wolf awaited the lamb for his victim-bride!

I knew, if no obstacle should be encountered—such as that which had just delayed us—that we could easily come up with the Mormon emigrants; and we had no longer a similar obstacle to dread. The whole country beyond was Utah territory; and we could count upon these Indians as friends. From that quarter we had nothing to apprehend, and the caravan might be overtaken.

But what then? Even though in company with it, for my purpose I should be as powerless as ever. By what right should I interfere with either the squatter or his child? No doubt, it was their determination to proceed with the Mormons, and to the Mormon city—at least the father's determination. This was no longer a matter of doubt; and what could I urge to prevent his carrying it out? I had no argument—not the colour of a claim—for interference in any way!

Nay, it was more than probable that to the migrating Mormons I should be a most unwelcome apparition—to Stebbins I certainly should, and perhaps to Holt himself. I might expect no very courteous treatment at their hands. With Stebbins for their leader—and that fact was now ascertained—I might find myself in danger from his *Danites*—of whom no doubt there was a party 'policing' the train.

Such considerations were not to be disregarded. I knew the hostility which, even under ordinary circumstances, these fanatics are accustomed to feel towards outsiders from their sect; but I had also heard of their *display* of it, when in possession of the power. The 'Sectary' who sets foot in the city of Latter-day Saints, or travels with a Mormon train, will be prudent to keep his dissent to himself. Woe to him if he proclaim it too boastfully!

Not only with difficulties then, but with dangers was my prospect beset; though the difficulties caused me far more concern than the actual dangers. Had Holt been upon my side—had I been certain of his consent—I should have cared little for the dangers of an *abduction*, the course to which my thoughts now pointed. Even had I been sure that Lillian herself would agree to such a thing, I should have deemed all danger light, and still have entertained a hope of its accomplishment. Alas! the father would not consent—the daughter might not?

It was the doubt that gave the darkest shade to my reflections.

I continued them—turning the subject over and over—viewing it in every shape and from every side.

Surely Holt would not contribute to the ruin of his daughter—for in no other light did I regard her introduction to the society of the Mormon city? There was manhood in the man—somewhere down near the bottom of his heart—perhaps some remnants of rough virtue? This I had myself proved; and if filial testimony were to be trusted, he was not so abandoned a character as he appeared. Was it possible he could be aware of the real intentions of the churl who was leading him and his to ruin?

After all, he *might* not. It is true he must have known that Stebbins was a Mormon; but as Marian

had suggested—in her efforts to justify him, poor girl—he might be ignorant of the true character of these sanctified *forbans*. The story that Marian had died on her way out, shewed that he was being grossly deceived about that matter. It also gave colour to the idea, that he might be equally the victim of deception about the other. It was in hopes of being able to hold him guiltless I had so closely questioned Marian—for instinct had already whispered me that in his hands, more than in aught else, rested my hope or my ruin. For that reason had I been so eager to ascertain his inclinations.

That he was under some obligation to the pseudo-apostle was perfectly clear—more than a mere obligation—something that produced a condition of awe: as I had myself been a witness. Some dark secret, no doubt, was shared between them. But were it ever so dark—even were it black murder—it might not be on the part of Holt a voluntary endurance; and Marian had hinted at something of this sort. Here—out in the midst of the wild desert—far from justice and from judges—punishment for an old offence might be less dreaded; and a man of the bold stamp of this Tennessee squatter might dream of escaping from the ties of terror in which his spirit had so long been writhing?

Conjectures of this nature were chasing one another through my brain; and not without the effect of once more giving a brighter tinge to the colour of my mental horizon.

I naturally turned my eyes upon Marian. In her I beheld an ally of no ordinary kind—one whose motive for aiding me to rescue her sister, could be scarce less powerful than my own.

Poor girl! she was still in the enjoyment of those moments of bliss! She knew not the misery that was yet in store for her. Wingrove had my directions to be silent upon that theme—the more easily obeyed in the fulness of his own happiness.

It was no pleasant task to dash from their lips the cup of sweet joy; but the time was pressing, and as the sacrifice must come, it might as well be at once.

I saw that the Utahs had given up the pursuit. Most of them had returned to the scene of their short conflict; while others, singly or in squads, were coming on towards the butte. The women, too, were approaching—some with the wounded—some carrying the bodies of the slain warriors—chanting the dismal death-song as they marched solemnly along.

Casting a glance at the wailing multitude, I leaped down from the rock; and rapidly descended to the plain.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

A TRUE TIGRESS.

I walked out towards the stream. The lovers met me half-way. As I looked in their eyes, illumined and sparkling with the pure light of love, I hesitated in my intent.

'After all,' thought I, 'there will not be time to tell her the whole. The Indians will soon be on the ground. Our presence will be required in the council; and perhaps it will be better to postpone the revelation till that is over. Let her enjoy her new-found happiness for a moment longer.'

I was thus hesitating—at the same time looking the beautiful huntress in the face—when all of a sudden, I saw her start, and fling from her the hand she had been hitherto holding in her fond clasp!

The look of her lover—mine as well—was that of bewildered astonishment.

Not so hers. Her cheek turned pale—then red—then paled again; while a glance of proud anger shot forth from her eyes!

They were turned out upon the plain, back upon Wingrove, and then once more quick and piercing towards the plain.

Merciful heavens! what could it mean?

I faced round in the direction indicated by her glance; I found the explanation.

The chief, Wa-ka-ra, had arrived at the butte; and sat halted upon his war-steed by the side of the wagon. There were three or four other Indians around him, mounted and afoot; but one on horseback was entirely unlike the rest: it was a woman.

She was not bound, yet it was easy to see she was a captive. This could be told by the way she was encircled by the Indians, as well as their treatment of her.

She was on horseback, as already stated, and near to the Utah chief—in front of him.

Neither Wingrove nor I had any difficulty in identifying the captive. It was Su-wa-nee, the Chicasaw.

The eagle eye of jealousy had found her equally easy of identification; more so: since it was by it she was first recognised. It was upon her that Marian was directing those lightning glances. It was she who had caused that convulsive start, and those fearful emotions that now proclaimed themselves in the countenance of the huntress-maiden.

The storm soon burst.

'Perjured hypocrite! this is the love you have sworn, with the oath still burning upon your lips? Once more betrayed! O man! Once more betrayed! O God! would that I had left you to your fate!'

'I declare, Marian!—'

'Declare nothing more to me! Enough—yonder is your attraction—yonder! Oh! to think of this outrage! Here—even here to the wild desert has he brought her; she who has been the cause of all, my unhappy—Ha! she is coming to you! Now, sir, meet her face to face—help her from her horse—wait upon her! Go! villain, go!'

'I swear, Marian, by the livin'—'

His speech was interrupted; for at that moment Su-wa-nee, who had shot her horse clear from the *entourage* of her guards, came galloping upon the ground.

I was myself so surprised at this act, that I could not stir from the spot; and not until the Chicasaw had halted directly in front of us, could I believe that I was otherwise than dreaming. Wingrove appeared equally the victim of a bewildered surprise.

As Su-wa-nee drew up, she gave utterance to a shrill scream; and flinging herself from her horse, bounded straight towards Marian, who had turned away at the conclusion of her frantic speech, and was now close to the bank of the stream, with her back towards us.

There was no mistaking the intention of the Chicasaw. The hideous expression of her face—the lurid fire burning in her oblique eyes—the white teeth shining and wolf-like—all betrayed her horrid design, which was further made manifest by a long knife seen glittering in her grasp!

With all my voice, I raised a warning-shout; Wingrove did the same—so, too, the Utahs who were following their captive.

The shout was heard, and heeded. Fortunately it was so: else in another instant warning would have been too late, and the vengeful Chicasaw would have launched herself upon her victim.

Marian turned at the cry. She saw the approaching danger; and with the subtle quickness of that Indian nature common to both, she placed herself in an attitude of defence.

She had no weapon. Her late love-scene needed none. Her rifle had been left by the butte, and she was without arm of any kind; but, quick as thought, she wound the Mexican *serapé* about her arm, and held it to shield her body from the threatened thrust.

The Chicasaw paused, as if to make more certain of her blow; and for a moment the two stood face to face, glaring at each other with that look of

concentrated rage which jealousy alone can give. It was the tigress about to spring upon the beautiful panther that has crossed her path.

All this action was well-nigh instantaneous—so quick in its occurrence, that neither I nor Wingrove could get up in time to hinder the assailant. We both hurried forward as fast as it was in our power; but we should have been too late, had the thrust been better aimed, or less skilfully avoided.

It was given. With a scream, the Chicasaw shot forward and dealt the stroke; but, by a dexterous sleight, the huntress received it on the *serapé*, and the blade glanced harmlessly aside.

We rushed on to get between them; but at that moment a third combatant had mingled in the fray; and the safety of Marian was secured. It was not the hand of man that had rescued her; but one whom, perhaps, she deemed more faithful. It was the dog Wolf!

The impetus which the Indian had given to the thrust, and its consequent failure, had carried her past her intended victim. She was turning with the design of renewing the attack, when the dog rushed upon the ground. With a savage growl, he sprang forward; and vaulting high into the air, launched himself on the breast of the Chicasaw, at the same instant seizing her by the throat!

In this position he clung, holding on by his terrible teeth, and aided by his paws, with which he kept constantly clawing the bosom of the Indian!

It was a painful spectacle; and now that Marian was safe, Wingrove and I ran onward with the intention of releasing the wretched Chicasaw from the grasp of the dog. Before we could get near, both victim and avenger disappeared from our sight!

The Indian in her wild terror had been retreating backward. In this way she had reached the bank; and fallen back downward upon the water!

As we arrived upon the edge, neither woman nor dog was visible. Both had sunk to the bottom; but almost on the instant, they reappeared on the surface, the dog uppermost—his teeth still fastened upon the throat of his human victim!

Half-a-dozen men leaped into the water; and after a struggle, the savage animal was dragged from his hold.

It was too late. The sharp incisors had done their dread work; and as the body of the wretched woman was raised over the bank, those who lifted it perceived that the last breath had gone out of it. The limbs were supple, and the pulse no longer beat.

Su-wa-nee had ceased to live!

THE GOLD-FIELDS WITH THE GILT OFF.

I HAVE read, and they are almost the only books I have read, not a few accounts of Life at the Diggings, written no doubt by persons who know how to use a pen far better than I—I should have written 'than me,' if it wasn't for a grammatical friend who kindly supervises me—but I have never seen it printed from the digger's own point of view. Literary gentlemen have gone over to the gold-fields for the express purpose of describing them; lawyers and parsons have put their hands to the same work there, when they found the pick and the spade unsuited to them; but such folks, after all, kept aloof from diggers' society, or if they mixed with it, did so under restraint, and in an unnatural kind of fashion. They were sometimes worse than the diggers, mind you, for when an educated man does fall, he often goes into the mud all the deeper on account of the height he came from, but they were not of them, as he ought to be who would describe them aright. What I have to say may not be so good, but it will be true, for I was a digger myself, and made my money in a claim at Woolshed Creek, Australia.

I was the man that first introduced the American Ten Pin Alley into that quarter of the globe. I built it in the town of Melbourne, on land that cost us—that is to say the company, for I brought nothing into the concern but ideas—L.4, 10s. *per annum* the square foot; and the building stood us in near L.300, though it was but wood. The first set of 15 balls were brought from America for L.35, before we found out that there was *lignum vite* wood at Sydney. With all that outlay, the thing would yet have been a fortune to us, clearing as it did from L.12 to L.25 a day, only its success encouraged other speculators, with greater funds, and we were ruined by opposition bowling alleys, the erection of one of which cost no less than L.4000. This, may be, will give some notion of the enormous capital floating in those parts among a class of persons who in this country are content with a dry skittle-ground for their place of amusement, which costs them about sixpence in an afternoon. Your political economists and the rest of them know very little, I reckon, about the habits and means of those who spend their pound an hour in the American Ten Pin Alleys in Melbourne, which I first introduced.

But what was this to the money that was spent, lavished, squandered, flung away, at the gold-fields themselves? There were men at Woolshed who, never before worth a ten-pound note in their lives, there found themselves receiving incomes from L.50 to L.1000 *per week*, which they absolutely knew not how to dispose of. Nearly all of these bought race-horses—many of them three or four—and backed them against others in private matches for from L.100 to L.5000. I owned a mare that ran from Wangaratta to the Creek (at Woolshed) and back, a distance of 60 miles, under three hours, and thereby won me upwards of L.500. I am aware that that is nothing to the stakes which the horses of the nobility run for in this country, but it was pretty well for a day-labourer like myself. Every amusement was invented in order to enable men to get through their money—jumping-matches, foot-races, and races between men carrying others upon their backs. A favourite indoor game was for two men to stand over a crack (of which there were generally plenty), in the bar-room of some hotel, with their hands full of sovereigns. Then each would toss one up to the ceiling, and the one that came down nearest to the crack, why, that beat the other. The simplest thing in the world.

Another bet—of L.200—I saw decided quite as easily, as to whether a stone could be thrown from a given spot over the roof of a certain hotel. In these hotels, drinking, dancing, and fighting were carried on all day long and until midnight. It was not at all uncommon to see half-a-dozen regular 'set-tos' daily—not drunken squabbles, but prize-fights got up for from L.10 to L.100. Many a night, too, a public-house would empty of its customers, that they might see some dispute that had occurred there settled outside. A ring would be formed, the front row of which consisted of men holding black bottles with lighted candles stuck in them, so that the combatants might see how to fight. After it was over, all would go into the house, to drink again, and the candles be put back into the places from which they had been snatched; only it was generally necessary to take the pugilists into the back-yard, and recover them by means of cold water.

Young women were brought from town, and engaged at these hotels to attend the bar and table by day, and be prepared to dance with the customers at night. The only room that was usually floored was the ball-room, at the upper end of which was a raised platform for the piano and other music. The dancing commenced at 8, and continued till 11, there being from half-a-dozen to a dozen girls attached to each hotel. Each man, after dancing, was expected to ask his

partner what she would have to drink, and also to drink himself, which would cost 3s. By this means, an evening's dancing was made to cost at least from 20s. to 30s. These girls got from L.3 to L.9 a week, and their board. Many of them were brought to the mines by an American speculator, who drove a wagon and four horses, and could therefore carry a good lot at a time. He used to drive, like a commercial traveller, from one hotel to another, and inquire what they were giving for gals just then; he himself being paid by the parties who took them off his hands, and the girls making a private bargain for their own wages. The demand continued, too, for a very long time, because they were constantly leaving, and getting married, as was natural enough.

It was after we had bought a claim for L.80 or so, out of which—after paying the men we put in to work for us L.5 a week—we cleared L.20 a-head per week, that one of my partners shewed his first symptoms of marrying. He had agreed with me, a little while before, to leave the country with me as soon as we had made our fortunes. But coming into my tent one night, as I was cooking a steak for tea, with a peculiarly foolish sort of expression on his face, I knew quite well that *that* scheme was over, and that Joe was a doomed man.

'Well, John,' said he, 'I fear you'll have to go home alone, after all. The fact is, I'm thinking of being married.'

'The deuce you are, Joe,' replied I. 'I knew you was getting spooney, but I had hoped better things on you than that too.'

'You're a clever fellow with your tools,' he went on, 'and I want you to help build a house for us to live in.'

'Well, Joe,' said I, 'if you can't get clear of it, I will help you.' And this is the house that Jack built—as they called it, on account of my name being John.

I marked out a spot to set it on, and then going into the woods with my axe, I cut down all the timber for the frame. I then bought some sawn timber, and split some slabs, for it was determined that it should be a grand house (for the Diggings), all slabbed throughout. I made it 18 feet by 12 inside, with walls 8½ feet high, and a nice little chimney with a tin top. At one side I put a door, and a window on each side of it: the door was of pine, and an imported one; and the windows were also imported, being about half the size of cottage-windows in this country. The roof was cotton, over which we put a fly of cotton, about a foot higher, and allowed it to extend two or three feet in front, which answered the purpose of a verandah. There was actually a brass knocker on the door—the usual digger-fashion being to hollow outside a fellow's tent, so that the dogs may be called from the door, which are usually kept there; and if there is no answer, it is safest not to go into that tent at all, as there is no knowing what may have happened there before, which you, perhaps, may get the blame of. The inside of the house I lined all round with fancy druggat, and divided into two rooms, one 6 by 12 for a bedroom, and the other 12 by 12 for sitting-room and kitchen. The ceiling was arched, and made of white cotton, having a pretty border tacked over where it joined the druggat. The kitchen was covered with handsome India matting, and furnished with three American cane-bottomed chairs, a table, and a sideboard having three shelves, and a cupboard below, with the panels of the doors made of plaited red silk. The wife covered these shelves with napkins, letting the fringed edges hang down a few inches, which, when the dishes and glasses were arranged, produced quite a beautiful effect. She wanted a little sofa very badly; but that was beyond my powers, and the price of such an article would have been tremendous. One day, however, I saw a handsome carved back of one lying about in a public-house, with the rest of it

smashed to pieces, and bought it for a pound; and I made a seat to suit it, and covered the whole with black merino. It gave a grand air to the room. With white muslin curtains tastefully arranged about the windows, that house was rather a show at Woolshed Creek, let me tell you. I was first-man at that marriage. The minister came just before twelve, did his work very quickly, pocketed his eight pounds, and rode away again; and we should have had a first-rate luncheon, only the flies spoiled both fowl and meat, and put the bride in a pretty temper, as I could see. Poor Joe!

I saw two sights before I left the Diggings, which I shall never forget—a Lynching, and an Election of a Member of Parliament. In every Digging there was a 'Camp,' which consisted of an enclosure situated generally upon rising-ground, and at a distance from the majority of the miners, inside of which were tents or slab-houses for the accommodation of policemen, troopers, licence-officers, magistrates, post-office clerks, &c.; as well as a gold-office, where men put their savings as into a bank, and paid for the security of their treasure. Over all the camp and the gold-field ruled a Commissioner, to regulate fines and settle disputes by arbitration. Every man on the mines was supposed to have a licence, in default of which he was liable to be taken to the lock-up for a certain period, or to a fine of five pounds; and mounted and foot policemen were constantly patrolling about demanding of the diggers to shew this. A trooper rode up to the next claim to mine, which two strangers had taken the previous day, and asked to see his licence of him that was working in the pit. The man gave some impertinent answer, and the trooper dismounting, leaped down into the hole at once, to enforce his authority: unluckily, the trigger of his carbine caught in the earth as he descended, and the piece went off, shooting the unhappy digger through the head. Such a scene as followed I cannot even attempt to describe. The licence-system and its officers were of course by no means popular; and now that a murder, as it was called, had been committed by one of them, it seemed as though all the inhabitants of the camp would have to pay the penalty with their lives. The diggers rose in thousands in less time than it takes to write about it, and seizing the trooper, carried him away to a rising-ground to hang him. It was fearful to see the agony of the pale and shivering wretch, tossed from arm to arm in the van of that awful host of furious men, and amid a tempest of curses. It seemed as though, along with that poor wretch's life, all order and authority were to be swept away together. Both mounted and foot policemen made their escape out of camp as quickly as possible, being as they were but as one to a hundred, and standing no chance for their lives, if it came to shooting, all except one young man of eighteen or so, the clerk of the gold-office, who remained faithful to his post, with a loaded revolver in each hand, with which he swore to blow out the brains of any who should cross the threshold. The diggers, I remember, gave him three cheers for this as they went by, partly because of his pluck, and partly, perhaps, because many of them had money of their own in his keeping. But they were no less determined to hang the trooper. There was a tree on the ground they had chosen, and a rope was fixed to it and round the prisoner's neck as quick as thought. He was almost dead, poor fellow, with fright and ill-usage already, and they were about pulling at the rope when up rode the old gray haired Commissioner, into the very centre of the infuriated mass.

'Don't commit murder, my men,' cried he; 'don't let it be said against me that my diggers here are a set of murderers.'

The Commissioner was respected more than any of his underlings, and he was known to be a just man, although he did his duty unflinchingly. So they

listened to him just for a moment, and then began to take their places for hauling at the rope again.

'He's a murderer himself,' cried one of them, pointing to the prisoner; and 'Ay, ay,' echoed the rest of them.

'Nay, but if he is,' exclaimed the Commissioner, 'I will give you my word, boys, that he shall hang for it. Only, it may be that his gun went off by accident.'

And here I lifted up my voice—which they would not listen to before—and told how the thing had really occurred, just as I had seen it; and how that the man had never so much as pointed his carbine at the other at all. And finally, more dead than alive, the trooper was released, and given over into the Commissioner's custody, who took care to send him out of the Diggings that very night. The gold-office clerk got L.1000, I believe, from government, and he certainly richly deserved it.

The other very remarkable spectacle which I witnessed in the gold-fields, was the election of a parliamentary representative—the chosen of the diggers. The town-ship (Beechworth) was crowded with people; flags were flying everywhere, and the streets filled with singers, dancers, and fighting-men. In the public-houses, the scene was dreadful: men in every stage of drunkenness were lying about, with clothes torn, and faces bruised. Those who were able to drink, were calling for more drink; and everybody was treating everybody else, and everybody wanted to pay. Great as had been the attention paid to the purveying of liquors, the supply of food was quite inadequate. Cold-boiled ham, and bread and cheese, were the only eatables to be had, while champagne and the costliest wines were to be got for the asking; for was not the first member ever sent to the legislative council by diggers elected that day! The Ovens, which comprised eight or nine mining districts, was to send one man, and nearly every district had its man to send. The Woolshed (chief town, Beechworth), which, although not the most thickly populated, was the wealthiest, nominated Duncan Cameron, formerly a lieutenant in the Glasgow police, and latterly a store-keeper at the Woolshed. His popularity arose from the fact, that he had largely assisted many of the diggers, now rich men, when they were poor and struggling, by giving them money and goods on credit, while they were sinking their expensive 'claims.' When Cameron was nominated, these men—called 'bosses' or proprietors—subscribed at once the money for his qualification (L.3000); and on the election-day, gave all their men a holiday, and a day's pay. Some of these gentlemen, at the hotel I was drinking at myself, were ordering up liquor at the rate of L.100 worth at a time, and one of them was even said to have ordered up L.300 at once. At another house, where they had met to arrange matters after the election, the proprietor came in, and asked permission to send in a dozen of champagne in return for the honour of their patronage. After they had drunk this, the different bosses ordered each a dozen on his own account, and again and again, until each had ordered twelve dozen; but as they could not drink it all, they arranged a number of bottles on the floor like ninepins, and then rolled other bottles at them. One gentleman filled another's hat, whom he did not like, with the costly liquor, and then placed it on the owner's head—for which piece of fun he had afterwards to pay L.60 of damages.

It being unlawful to sell drink after twelve o'clock in public-houses at the mines, all those who were not inmates for the night were bundled into the streets, except the very intoxicated, who were taken to a place called the Black Hole—attached to all such houses of entertainment—furnished with bunks, such as are in ships, only with higher front-boards, arranged all round the walls. In these places, they were locked up without light or ventilation—and the

state of filth in which these black holes were suffered to remain is not to be described in words—until morning. The less drunken slept on the floors of the different rooms, where a mattress and a blanket were laid down for each man's accommodation.

Among such scenes, small care, as may be imagined, was bestowed upon the sick and helpless. A medical man, much esteemed in those parts, was thrown from his horse outside the town, and grievously injured, so that he could not move. He prevailed on one man, for a sovereign, to drag him under the shade of a tree, but could not induce him, for the same money, to take the trouble of telling his friends of the condition he lay in. You see one rarely gives less than a sovereign at a Diggings for any service. Finally, I may mention, as a concluding evidence of the wealth and waste of the gold-fields, to which so many honest folks have been seduced to their own ruin, that the bosses actually hired a horse from the proprietor of a circus for Cameron to ride into the township on, and *shod his feet with pure gold!*

GERMAN DOCTORS.

THERE is at present a strong tide of English emigration setting in towards South Germany, health, economy, and education being, I think, the three principal inciting motives. The natives are greatly surprised, and not over and above gratified, at this truant disposition in a people whom they love so little as they do the English. 'Have these Engländer no Vaterland of their own, that they come here raising the price of provisions?' is the frequent question of the frugal Hohenbrateners, who, some years since, paid but nine kreuzers a pound for the meal which now costs thirteen. 'What do you English come here for?' inquired a Frau one day of a lively young friend of mine. 'Well,' replied the young lady, lowering her voice to the proper tone of mystery, 'I don't mind telling you in confidence—we come here to wear out all our old clothes! Dresses that we could by no means appear in in England, are quite good enough for Hohenbraten.'

With respect to health, certainly the first thing to be looked to in the choice of a residence, there is not much to be said against our Swabian capital. 'We have,' said an English-speaking German, 'a better mortality than any other town in Germany;' by which equivocal phrase he meant to imply, that the mortality was less. 'Your morals are bad,' said Dick to his son. 'That's false,' quoth the other, 'because I have none.' So may we say of the Hohenbraten sewerage: it is not bad, simply because it is non-existent. There is literally not a dwelling-house in the whole place which possesses a sewer. The local monarch was once strongly exhorted by his medical attendants to procure the removal of the evil smells which infest the palace and its vicinity, by causing a system of sewers to be constructed; but the royal lips were graciously pleased to intimate, that such odours were rather agreeable than otherwise to the royal nose; and, further, the brave old gentleman, the finest specimen of an aged monarch in Europe, declared, that having lived seventy-eight years in that palace in the enjoyment of perfect health, he was not going to make any changes now. Truly, no one can look at the upright carriage, the firm step, the ruddy cheek, the bright blue eye, and the brown hair scarcely touched by age, and have the hardihood to assert that aught unwholesome can haunt the royal dwelling. Amiable and excellent are the whole kingly family, worthy of a better people than the dull, uncourteous Schwabs, who, as I witnessed, allowed their monarch, on his seventy-eighth birthday, to ride through them with scarcely a sign of recognition, and without getting up the faintest whisper in the nature of a cheer. 'I have no patience

with you people,' I said to a German who stood next me in the Park, to see the royal party go by. 'If that fine old king belonged to us, we would huzza for him until we were hoarse.' 'Ah,' replied he, 'it is not our way; we are ashamed to make such demonstrations.' And truly, I believe, in their own rough, rude manner, the Schwabs are fond of him whom they call their 'well-beloved King William.' But to return to 'caparisons,' which certainly are 'odorous.' Vineyards, with all their associations of sunny grapes, and smiles, and wine, not to speak of Bacchus and Hebe, are no doubt vastly poetical, but defend me from approaching them during the months of spring! They are then thickly covered over with the unmentionable materials conveyed through the streets of Hohenbraten in certain huge barrels known as the 'Swabian smelling-bottles,' *alias* the 'Hohenbraten honey-pots.' Cologne, with its 'seventy-two well-defined and several stinks,' is but the feeble *eidolon* of our town. And the beauty of it is, that our people not merely tolerate the atmosphere that pervades their city—they positively, headed by their physicians, defend it. Epidemics, they say, are caused by an undue preponderance of acidity in the air. The smells in the streets are pure ammonia, which, being a strong alkali, neutralises the acid, and averts epidemic disease. Be this as it may, the town is far more healthy than any one reasoning *a priori* could possibly imagine. Every family, however, is liable to illness; and it is pleasant to know what one has to trust to in the way of medical aid. The physicians of South Germany are, as a class, gentlemanly and well educated; wonderfully so, considering the wretched remuneration they receive. The fee is fixed by law at half a *gulden* (tenpence) the visit, and the first medical man in the land cannot demand more. It is certainly usual, especially amongst the English, at the end of an attendance, to pay on a somewhat more liberal scale; but the honorarium even then is such as would be spurned by an English apothecary. On one occasion, when there was serious illness in my family, I called in a second physician, and had reason to be much pleased with the skill which he shewed. After having paid three visits, the patient was quite out of danger, and the second doctor said to the first that it would no longer be needful for him to continue his attendance. I then privately inquired of the other physician how much it would be right for me to offer Dr ——. 'Well,' he said, 'he was called in as consulting-physician, and he has been here three times, so it will be right to offer him somewhat more than usual. Give him three gulden (five shillings), and it will be handsome!'

The usual style of medical practice in Swabia is very slow and cautious; pink and white draughts, herb-teas, and soothing balsams being exhibited, where a British physician would attack the malady root and branch. They have a great terror of using calomel; in fact, there is but one Arzt in Hohenbraten who ventures to employ it at all freely. He is a venerable old gentleman, of high reputation for skill, but a determined oddity. He is said to have an Abernethy horror of fine ladies and their fanciful ailments. One day a lady of high rank, afflicted with hypochondriacal fancies, was introduced into his audience-chamber. 'What do you complain of now?' asked the old gentleman gruffly. 'Oh,' she replied, 'whenever I touch my side, it gives me great pain.' 'Then,' said he, 'my advice to you is, *don't touch it!*'

On another occasion, he encountered in one of the most crowded thoroughfares of the town a lady who, although sufficiently robust, was continually plaguing him about her health. Now, if there was one thing the doctor hated more than another, it was being asked to give a travelling-opinion; but the lady, as a matter of course, stopped him, and propounded some medical query. There was a wicked twinkle in the

old gentleman's keen blue eye as he seemed to listen attentively. 'Ha! well,' he said; 'put out your tongue as far as possible.' She obeyed. 'Now, shut your eyes quite fast.' It was done; and with the utmost docility, the fair one awaited some oracular utterance from the learned lips of her physician. No sound, however, reached her ears, save the noise of the crowded street where she was standing, a spectacle to men and angels. Fancy for one moment, in a place as public as Charing Cross, at noon, a fashionably-dressed female standing stock-still, with her eyes fast closed, and her tongue protruded! She felt that she had a crowd of spectators thickening around her, and at length she ventured cautiously to unclose the corner of one eye. Where was the Herr Staat's Rath Ober-medicus? Vanished! Laughing in his wicked sleeve, he had made his escape as soon as he had got his fair patient arranged in her very peculiar pose.

It is not very easy for people to know exactly when the great man is to be sent for. He is equally annoyed when called in unnecessarily to a trifling indisposition, and when in case of serious illness the summons has been too long delayed. It happened once that a German lady, perceiving symptoms of indisposition in one of her children, sent for the Herr Staat's Rath. During the time which elapsed before his arrival, the little patient became apparently so much better that the mother began to fear she should get a terrible scolding for having summoned the great man without due cause. However, he arrived, made his inspection, and said in a grave tone: 'This child is very seriously ill.' 'Oh, Gott lob!' (Oh, thank God!) cried the mother, who, although a very affectionate one, lost for a moment her sense of her child's danger, in her excessive thankfulness at escaping the doctor's censure.

One circumstance very much in favour of both patient and physician, is the goodness and purity of the medicines sold in South Germany. The precautions taken by government to prevent fraud and adulteration are deserving of the highest praise. The apothecaries' shops are frequently visited by inspectors, who carefully test the various drugs, and if the slightest impurity be discovered, the vendor, for the first offence, is severely censured, and for the second, is deprived of his licence, and prohibited from retailing drugs in the kingdom. Great precautions, also, are taken against poisoning. You cannot obtain even the smallest quantity of any dangerous drug without a physician's written prescription. I remember once wanting two or three drops of laudanum on cotton, as a remedy for toothache, but in all Hohenbraten I could not procure it. The druggists knew quite well the purpose for which it was needed, and also that the quantity, even if swallowed, was insufficient to injure an infant, yet they all assured me that without a written order they could not venture to let me have it.

Toothache reminds one of dentists; and certainly, however good and conscientious the physicians may be, I would advise every British subject to endure any amount of dental inconvenience rather than intrust his jaws to the merciless handling of a Hohenbraten Zahnarzt. Some friends of mine were recommended to consult the court dentist, and they repaired to his dwelling. Now, whether Dr Fressenbein were skilled in his profession or not, was a matter by no means easy of discovery, inasmuch as the whole arrangement of his *Anstalt* wore a Hibernian rather than a Teutonic aspect, for, on investigation, it appeared that the court dentist was not the court dentist, and finally, that he was not a dentist at all! Whenever any of the august reigning family require any dental operation, they prudently ignore Hohenbraten manipulation, and employ an artist justly celebrated in that pleasant city, 'out of which,' quoth Longfellow, 'there is no salvation for decent people.' There is meaning, too, in the selection, as typifying political relations. To the same individual is assigned the task of keeping the imperial grinders sharp

and strong, and ready to bite; and also that of extracting from the petty German potentates any incisors that might hereafter become dangerous. But the Hofzahnarzt is now no dentist, seeing that he has given up to 'a deputy saw-bones' the good-will of his establishment, the vested interest in his stock-in-trade, consisting of various clumsy, uncanny-looking instruments of torture, sundry dim, cloudy phials of wrath, and a curious assortment of grinning pink wax gums, garnished with rows of thick, unpromising, specially unnatural-looking teeth, and furnished at either end with a cumbrous array of clamps and springs enough to set up a steam-engine. A thin, unsuccessful-looking little man is Dr Fressenbein, presenting a strong contrast to his thick, broad-faced associate, Herr Katzopolder. This gentleman took possession of my unfortunate friends, and extracted from the jaws of one young lady three perfectly sound new double teeth, leaving in those which were beginning to decay! 'Oh,' he said, when remonstrated with on his proceedings, 'the English are very *misstrauisch* (distrustful); they think that we Germans, in whatever we do, have a design on their *Geldbeutel*' (purse).

RIGHT OR WRONG?

WHEN it became known, in the quiet country town of Pyneton, in Dorsetshire, that young Mr Frederick Blount was actually engaged to be married to Lina Hausmann, the excitement amongst its most select circle was very considerable indeed—for my story begins nearly twenty years ago, and at that time Pyneton *did* boast a select circle, consisting chiefly of maiden and widow ladies of good family, all more or less 'county people' originally, who, having abundant leisure, kept a sharp eye upon their local society, and protested strongly against any admixture of a less aristocratic element, or any concession to the upsetting and levelling tendencies they lamented to observe in the age. Therefore, when Mrs Tracy, raising both hands over her cup of tea, broke out: 'Good Heavens! to think of a scion of Didcote coming down to a low foreign artist,' the circle around her felt this to be a burst of natural indignation only commensurate with the occasion, and responded to it with the utmost sympathy. For Fred Blount, with his handsome face and courteous manners, was a favourite with all the ladies of Pyneton, for his own sake as well as for that of his uncle, Mr Barlow, their respected pastor, added to which he had all the prestige properly belonging, in their eyes, to a Blount of Didcote Abbey, and a member of one of the oldest of the Dorsetshire families. Not, indeed, that, strictly speaking, he could have been said to have anything to do with Didcote, which was at present the property of a retired ironmonger of the name of Jobson—old Mr Blount, Fred's father, having with his son's consent, cut off the entail some four or five years before, and died shortly afterwards, leaving the stately but exceedingly dilapidated old abbey, and the deeply mortgaged estate, to be sold. When the portions settled upon his two married sisters were paid off, Fred found himself possessed of about a hundred and fifty pounds a year, to such utter ruin had a succession of improvident but exceedingly popular proprietors brought the fortunes of the old family. Nevertheless, in the estimation of half the town of Pyneton, Fred was still a Blount of Didcote; while the worthy Jobson, whose wealth was propping the abbey walls, draining the neglected lands, employing a much increased amount of labour, and doing more positive good in the neighbourhood than the old family had done for a generation or two, was looked upon in the light of an upstart usurer, whom it was the duty of good society to ignore and discountenance as much as possible. Meanwhile, Fred Blount had to fight his way on in the world as well as he could. It was a

bitter change and a hard struggle at first to a young man of fragile health, and brought up in every luxury as he had been; but he had a brave spirit of his own, and whenever his uncle, Mr Barlow, returned from a run up to town, he would report to inquiring friends that the young barrister was absorbed in books and study, and 'likely to rise, decidedly likely to rise.' Perhaps, if he had better known the nature of those books, he would have been less sanguine of professional success; but at all events Mr Barlow was right in reporting his nephew studious, and apparently reconciled to his new mode of life.

Once or twice a year, young Blount was in the habit of visiting Pyneton, and renewing his acquaintance with its inhabitants, with whom he had never been more popular than when this announcement fell upon them without any previous preparation whatever. Could it be true? The report was traced to that odious Jobson, who, it seems, knew the lady well, had several pictures by her hanging on his drawing-room walls, and spoke of her with the highest respect. Lady, indeed! An artist, a foreigner, and a protégée of the ironmonger! Pyneton society could pretty well guess the kind of person she must be. Poor Mr Barlow! The truth might indeed be got at through him, but who had courage to accost him on such a subject? Mr Barlow, good and kind as he was, had a fiery nature of his own, and knew how properly to resent a *mésalliance*. Some sad tradition there was of his only son—a scapegrace always—having crowned his other misdeeds by a plebeian marriage or worse, out in India somewhere. No one had heard his father mention his name, and it had been strongly surmised that Fred Blount would prove his heir. But what would he do now? No doubt this artful woman was papist as well as foreigner. Had it not oozed out, too, that she was older than Mr Blount? At least this was thought highly probable, and who could say what her antecedents might have been? The popular imagination drew a very dark picture indeed. We turn now to the reality.

Lina Hausmann was an artist's daughter, and, at the time we speak of, herself an artist of some merit. Left an orphan in early girlhood, she had inherited little from her German father beyond a certain graceful singularity of aspect, an earnest, thoughtful temperament, and a devoted love of art. Her English mother had tried hard to counteract this last, but the natural bias was too strong; and when this anxious but uncongenial parent was laid by her husband's side in the dismal city cemetery, and the young girl found herself alone with a few hundred pounds for her sole fortune, she resolved neither to eke out her means by giving lessons to young children, as Mrs Hausmann had done during her widowhood, nor to seek her English relations—cold and formal people, who offered the orphan a home, indeed, but had never forgiven her mother's runaway match—but at once to devote a portion of her little all to obtaining the best instruction in her father's favourite branch of art, flower-painting, and then to throw herself upon it as a profession. Miniature-painting, it had been suggested to her, would be a more lucrative pursuit; but she felt that her real success would lie in the other direction. Hers was a passionate love for nature, especially for flowers, which were almost her only experience of nature in perfection; while, on the other hand, an indifference to, or even a shy shrinking from society, had been fostered by the circumstances of her life. Her mother, a refined Englishwoman—although she had stepped out of her own sphere when she followed the fortunes of the wandering artist, had never felt herself at home in any other. The little Lina had had no childish playmates, the growing girl no youthful companions. Since she cannot associate with her equals, the mother had thought to herself, she is best alone; and so her favourite toys had been her father's old brushes

and colours, and her chief diversion a stroll with him. Others might have looked on this as a dreary life; the grave, affectionate girl herself never remembered it as having been such while her father lived. She had been satisfied with the sense of happiness that came over her when he corrected a little and praised a great deal some juvenile effort of her pencil; or when, curled up upon his knee, in the gloom of a winter evening, he would tell her bright tales of skies and flowers, palaces and paintings of other lands; or sad tales of his own gentle German mother, who grew quite blind before her early death; or, better still, when, in his fine barytone voice, he would trol out for her some of the student-songs of his native Heidelberg. After she lost him, there came indeed a period of gloom, but it was not long enough to depress her energies; and when she was left alone, the very strength of purpose necessary was abundant support, and her art itself abundant excitement; so that sitting there day by day in that dingy room, her whole soul absorbed in her work, the grave, earnest, singular-looking girl had been perhaps more enviable than many of her more prosperous sisters. At the time our story begins, she was five-and-twenty, and the struggling part of her career seemed over. Her master had told her, some time ago, that he could teach her nothing further; her pictures already commanded a ready sale; and their decided merit began to extort notice from the most ornacular critics of the day. To all this she might have added no small degree of social success, for, besides that people began to remember here and there how well-born and well-connected the mother of the successful young artist had been, her own graceful figure and rich contralto voice would have insured her a welcome into many a gay circle. But Lina was too shy or too proud to find any enjoyment there, and steadily declined all invitations; only sometimes, in the summer, she might be bribed by her love of wild-flowers, ferns, &c., to pay a country visit, and it was in the course of one of these that she had first met Fred Blount. A week spent together in a country-house in the sweet summer season; a few long walks at the close of pleasant days, with nature enjoyed, sunsets watched, songs sung together, and they parted lovers in all but words. They met again in London, and that constantly. They had been engaged for a year before the fact transpired to horrify the town of Pyneton. How happy Lina had during this year been, it would not be easy to say. Her intense nature fully awakened for the first time—her intellect stimulated by a companionship more thoughtful and cultivated than she had ever known—the cold sense of loneliness which had hung over her since she lost her father, all dispelled, it would be no exaggeration to say that she enjoyed a present bliss, unalloyed alike by one regret for the past, or one fear for the future. Fred was happy too, but his was a more checkered feeling. Naturally of an anxious temper, he often suspected that he had done unwisely in choosing for a profession one to which he could not give an undivided allegiance. Had he been—as he once expected to have been—a man of independent means, he would have lived a student's life, absorbed in certain abstruse speculations, which had, ever since his college-days, secretly possessed a strong attraction for him. Even as things were, he could not forego them altogether, and Stephens and Chitty would often be thrown aside for Kant and Cousin. In this direction, if in any, lay the path he could have trodden with self-satisfaction. But what of that? He was now a lawyer—had, if so it might be, to earn a living at the bar; and it behoved him more than ever to work hard in his uncongenial calling, for Lina's sake as well as his own.

Meanwhile, Lina's favourite dream was, by the exercise of her own beloved art, to free him from this necessity; to secure for him so complete an

independence of professional drudgery as would leave him free to follow the bent of his own inclination. He had no prejudice, she knew, against an active career for woman; he would let her continue hers; and for the first time there mingled with her desire for excellence, a keen appreciation of the wealth it would bring in its train. 'For him, for him,' she would murmur to herself, as she hung over some exquisitely delicate painting, and touched and retouched till her copy had the very texture as well as the hue of the flowers before her. 'It is not fitting that he should be poor—his life and mine have been so differently spent: he has all the tastes of the man of family and fortune; I, the artist's daughter, used to struggle from my childhood—I do not share, but it will be my joy to minister to these.' And so she would sit and dream, while the fairy fronds of some delicate fern, or the down on the stalk of some fragile wild-flower, grew beneath her fingers. But of late weeks she would sometimes stop to close her large blue eyes, strained as they felt by the over-intenseness of their gaze, or to press her hand over her forehead, which sometimes quivered with a sudden and darting pain, which she would not mention to Fred (reliant by nature, she had become more so by much living alone), neither would she give into it, for the picture before her must be finished by the approaching Exhibition. It would sell, she calculated, for a considerable sum; other commissions would probably follow; and then—and then—She was so deep in her happy reverie one day, that Fred actually entered the room unnoticed, and exclaimed at her paleness, and at the weary look in her sweet eyes. But as he kissed them, their light returned, and the colour rushed so richly into her cheek, that he began to think his impression had been indeed 'all fancy,' as she declared.

'But you must promise me not to overwork yourself in my absence, my Lina,' he said.

'In your absence!' she replied, in a voice of dismay, for it was their first parting.

'Yes; I have had heavy tidings to-day. My good old uncle, Barlow, is ill, and alone. You know how much I owe to his kindness. I cannot refuse to go to him, even though I leave my Lina. But it will not be for long—I could not stand that.' Then turning to her picture: 'What an exquisite group this is! How tender, how minute! Why, it makes my eyes ache to look at your microscopic touches, my fairy. But come out with me now, and let us have a walk. I half suspect you work too hard. I declare I'm jealous of your art, Lina.'

'You need not,' she said, with a smile so bright, that no one could have guessed how violent the pain that shot through her forehead and eyes as she spoke. She had been overworking, perhaps; but she was not going to tell him of this—and so spoil utterly his last walk with her.

The evening was gloomy and chill; the shadow of their parting hung on the spirits of both. Whatever subject they took up led into a vein of sadness. Lina did not know why, but she spent the greater part of the night in tears. When morning came, her eyes were so red and heavy, she was almost glad Fred would not see them. She must work hard, she said, to overcome this singular depression; and she *did* work hard, though at times a strange dimness crept over her sight, and her hand was oftener pressed to her throbbing forehead than it had ever been before. The third day there came a letter from Fred, so long and loving, that it half reconciled her to his absence, half increased her yearning for his return. He had found his uncle worse than he expected. There was to be a consultation on the morrow; his next letter would give the result, and fix the day of his return. Another day of continuous painting, of more pain to contend with, of strange flashes of light alternating with that occasional dimness. She would rest her eyes,

she resolved, as soon as she got Fred's next letter. She could bear inaction with his return to look forward to.

Alas! the letter, when it comes, does not fix his return. A short sea-voyage is pronounced the only hope in his uncle's case; a friend has placed his yacht at his disposal; he will not make the experiment alone, but if Fred will accompany him, consents to try the effect of a short cruise. It would be unkind, ungrateful to deny the old man's request. A month at furthest will restore him to his Lina, and she will feel as he does, that there was no alternative. O yes, she does feel it; he was right, right always. His uncle has been a second father. Had she been well, the brave-hearted woman would have acquiesced cheerfully; but as it was, she could not conquer her sadness. She could not keep it back from him—write cheerfully this last letter that he could receive before the yacht sailed, and work the dismal time of separation away. But when, having finished her letter, she went to her painting that morning, she found work impossible. Large spots of red seemed to gather on the petals of the water-lilies she was copying; the pain in the eyeballs grew intolerable. Her heart beat thick and anxiously lest, if this went on, she might be obliged to give up her occupation for weeks or months. Better to take prompt measures to have the tedium of repose now, that she might be quite well when Fred returned. She went straightway to one of the most celebrated oculists of the day. The sympathy of his manner, the minuteness of his questions, alarmed her; her energetic nature could bear anything better than suspense. 'Did Doctor W— fear blindness?' 'He grieved to say he did.' 'Of what nature?' 'Of the most hopeless—amaurosis.'

Oh, thank God all you upon whom there has never fallen some sudden shattering agony like this, who have had to give up the whole hope of your life at an instant's notice—never had the glory and promise of the universe blotted from you by one single word! And thank God, too, when you stand by some fellow-creature thus stricken, that such blows, when they do come, stun as well as torture, and that their very magnitude prevents for a season the sense of their reality. When the power of thinking returned, Lina's first thought was of Fred. If this were indeed so; but no—it was impossible. At all events, it was well that his kind heart was not darkened with this horrible fear. A week—a fortnight passed; still, in spite of rest and remedial measures, the pain, the dimness, the flashes of light before the eyes. And yet no one looking into their blue depths could have seen anything beyond their beauty and their sadness, and in the heavy eyelids, the trace of frequent tears. The doctor had indeed told her that, above all things, tears were injurious. Ah! he did not know how much she had to weep over. Not only this art-world shut out from her, not only the loss of the pursuit that had been to her a passion, but the loss of love; for, as she lay there in her darkened room, one thought, one resolve grew clearer and stronger day by day: Fred's career should not be hampered by a blind wife. She knew his noble, honourable nature well; knew that this great affliction fallen upon her would only make him hold his plighted word more sacred than before; that he would choose hard work of any kind, choose poverty, even such as entailed loss of social station, choose any alternative rather than leave his poor sightless Lina desolate and alone. But she knew, too, very well, that to a man of his sensitive poetical temperament and early formed habits, poverty would have a peculiar sting. Then his own health was far from strong, and his spirits variable. Better for him the sharp sudden loss than the life-long burden. In the midst of her anguish, there came to the woman's heart the great strength of self-sacrifice—*better for him*. These words nerved her for all. It was well, too, for her that at this terrible

crisis she had to act as well as to suffer. Sometimes, in her anxiety to devise the measures by which this calamity should fall most lightly upon him, she for awhile almost forgot her share in it. It often occurred to her that it would be best if, on his return, he should find her gone. But, oh! the yearning for one more look into the face she so loved before darkness fell upon her for ever! Had he been with her when she first heard that dreadful sentence, the impulse to tell him her wretchedness might have been too strong. She rejoiced that he was not. But now she thought she could trust herself to one more meeting; at all events, she would make all her arrangements so as to be able to set off at a day's notice; but she would at least wait to hear of his safe return to England. Meanwhile, she employed her hours of ease, and of comparative clearness of vision, in modelling, from her most faithful memory, a bust of her lover. She had often modelled before, but never with such singular success—she knew every lineament of this face so well. Her whole soul was in her work, for this bust would be all that she should save out of the wreck of her life. This she would take with her into her banishment. Passing her hand thus over the high forehead, the heavy waves of hair, the regular features so familiar to her now, she could guard against the image in her heart ever becoming fainter.

By the time the bust was finished, the month had nearly expired, and still no letter to announce Fred's return. Lina's fast-waning sight warned her that her journey must not be much longer postponed. Everything was prepared for her departure; she only waited this letter, when one evening, as she sat in the twilight opposite her cherished bust, she heard his knock. The very moment he had landed, he had rushed to the train: he could not wait to write and prepare her. Oh, how was it that his arrival could agitate her thus? Had she been away, he should have expected her every hour till she came—she could never have taken him by surprise. But what was this change in the room? Where was the easel, the pictures? And worse, what was this change in her sweet face? So pale, and with so sad a look in her eyes! Ah, these partings were cruel things. Life was not long enough for them. They would never part again; he had made up his mind on that head. 'I'll throw metaphysics to the winds, and stick to my profession in earnest,' he said; 'and my Lina's white fingers shall work for both till I make my way.' Poor Lina! Leaning there her head upon his breast once more, his arms around her, his voice more tender even than his words, his kisses on her upturned face, who could have blamed her if, appalled at the contrast between the sheltering love she was leaving and the utter desolation she was going to, her sorrowful secret had escaped her? But no—she had thought it all over too often, had seen too clearly what was best for him. She rallied by one of those almost superhuman efforts that women can sometimes make, questioned him about his uncle's health, about his cruise, smiled away his anxiety about her altered looks. Before he left, his eye fell upon his own bust.

'So this is what you have been overtaking yourself with, my cleverest, foolishlest Lina! The bust is a marvel—too handsome for me, it's true—but what's the use of it? The man is your own, heart and soul; what do you want with his effigy?'

'Nay,' she said, 'stand by it a moment, and let me compare the two.' And she spanned first the living brow, and then the other, and passed her hand over the straight outline—the same in both.

He looked at her with surprise. 'I knew your blue eyes were short-sighted, Lina, but are they so short-sighted as that? Does the sense of touch actually help you here? Sweetest eyes, what do you mean by overflowing at so simple a question?' And looking into them with unutterable tenderness, he kissed them again and again, and left her—till

to-morrow evening—when they would have, he said, a long walk in the Kensington Gardens, and talk over their happy future.

Till to-morrow evening! Oh, by that time she should be far away indeed—far on the sea that would henceforth for ever lie between them. And he was gone, and there was so much that remained unasked, unsaid! Some words he might have spoken to quiet this torture of longing for his voice, some other last look she might have taken more satisfying than this one through her tears! Then came a fierce temptation to remain one other day, to see him once again. But she remembered how struck he had been with the change in her looks, even in the closing light of evening. In the broad day, in the open air, he could not fail to notice it far more. Her secret would escape her! If she weakly yielded to this passionate pleading of her heart for one more hour of happiness, might not the selfish longing grow uncontrollable? Could she trust herself further? Might she not come to think it most cruel to him to leave him in utter uncertainty of her fate? might not her once clear judgment become warped as to what was really best for him? She passed a terrible night—but before the morning came the struggle was over. When Fred called the following evening, she was gone—her servant gone—all tokens of her presence gone; only a charwoman there, sent in by the landlord, who knew nothing about the young lady—only a letter for him on the table, and beneath it the last picture she had painted.

Five years later, one fine August afternoon, there sat upon the deck of one of the Rhine steamers, then approaching Düsseldorf, an English group, who formed a striking contrast to the rest of the passengers: an elderly man, of very tall stature, and most imposing bearing ('the veritable Milord Anglais celui-là,' the Belgian steward affirmed), with a green shade over his eyes; a younger man, singularly handsome and interesting in appearance, but with traces of ill health and sorrow on his fine features; and a lovely little lady, who, by merry laugh and sprightly observation, seemed bent upon raising the spirits of her companions to the level of her own. But in this she met with indifferent success. There was but little mirth in the laugh that her pretty satire elicited from the younger of the two gentlemen, while the elder replied to it by a slight rebuke: 'Nonsense, Carrie; let me keep my eyes quietly shut. I can imagine no amusement in watching the manners and customs of German bores, or still more objectionable Cockneys. I only wish I could close my ears as well to the intolerable jargon that is going on all around.' The young lady sighed a little, and talked to her more responsive companion in a lower tone. Arrived at Düsseldorf, an English footman almost as majestic as his master, and a French maid almost as elegant as her mistress, were shrill and peremptory in their enumeration and reclamation of all the imperials, dressing-cases, and other packages belonging to Sir George and Miss Trevor; while the younger traveller quietly looked out his portmanteau and carpet-bag, upon which the address of Heidelberg was written. 'Never mind,' he said to himself; 'my time is my own, and she seemed pleased with the idea of my remaining with them, and hearing Dr G——'s verdict upon her father's eyes. Pretty little creature, she has a dull time of it enough with him, I daresay.'

Dinner over, it was of course imperative to take a look at the town of Düsseldorf; but Sir George preferred to rest his eyes, so the young people went out together. They lingered till the harvest-moon rose and cast its yellow radiance on the broad river, and then they reluctantly returned from a walk that had seemed short to both of them. It was not till he found himself alone in his own room that the habitual look of sadness recited upon the fine

features of Fred Blount; but once there, he walked up and down moodily enough, and then, suddenly stopping, unlocked his dressing-case, and took from a secret drawer a letter and a long coil of very fair hair. The letter looked worn and tattered at the edges with frequent opening. He knew every word of it by heart, and yet he read it this night over again. It was very short—contained only these incoherent words: 'It is because I love you so, Fred, that I leave you for ever. Trust me, it is best so. Do not pity me too much. While I live, I have the memory of your love; I have you to pray for. You made me very happy; I never knew before how much happiness God had given to his creatures here. Think of me tenderly, not sadly, as we do of the long ago dead, who loved us so much; we know they must love us still. Forgive me the pain I give—believe in me—it is best for you. Do not sorrow—but yet sometimes remember that I *was* your Lina.'

'Strange and inexplicable,' said the young man, starting up again, and walking up and down as before. 'How I have maddened over these contradictory lines! How I have exhausted conjecture! She loved me, and yet she could leave me in this horrible uncertainty. Could it have been through some caprice of pride? Can she have heard of my uncle's objection to our engagement? Others may have—this Carrie Trevor has for me—more beauty and brilliancy than Lina, but all nature seems poor and cold when this vivid memory of her comes over me. This visit to Heidelberg, however, shall be my last. Old Jobson may have been mistaken after all: it may not have been her that he saw in the Rotterdam steamer the night of her disappearance—and even if it were, Heidelberg may not have been her goal. It was her father's birthplace, I know, but I never heard her say that she had friends there. If only this intolerable mystery were cleared up, and I could forget her—forget her for ever!' And so the hours wore on far into the night.

Meanwhile, through the fair Carrie's dreams there floated the brightest visions her young heart had ever known; and Sir George Trevor, whose rest was broken by the anticipation of the decisive visit of the morrow, pleasantly diverted his mind by reflecting that young Blount really did seem a good deal taken with his little Carrie. Old Barlow's scapegrace had died, Sir George knew, within the last year; this favourite nephew was pretty sure to be his heir; and Barlow was said to be very shaky. And though, in the meantime, he might not be very well-off, there was not an older family among British commoners, and Sir George cared more for pedigree than purse; besides which, in the event of his sight being restored, and his daughter happily settled, the worthy baronet—a magnificent-looking man, as we have said—had matrimonial schemes of his own.

The next morning, father and daughter were to drive to the house of the eminent oculist, and Fred consented to accompany them thither. But he declined entering with them, preferring, he said, to spend the time in inspecting the adjoining asylum for the blind, which the benevolent doctor had instituted. There were not many inmates there; and finding he had still some half-hour to spare, he strolled into a small neighbouring cemetery, listlessly reading the names of the humble dead that rested there. On one of the simple black crosses, he started to see the name never long absent from his thought, 'Lina Hausmann'—a common name, he knew; but the drops stood thick on his forehead, and his knees knocked one against the other. There was no age, no date of death given, but the paint was fresh, and several fresh-looking garlands hung upon the cross. While he stood there, a little girl, with a shade over her eyes, came slowly and unsteadily along towards it. She had a little white garland to

hang there too. The child started, as Fred addressed her in a broken voice. 'Who was the Lina Hausmann buried there?'

'She was a blind woman who had been good to her. Once her parents thought she too would be blind. Now, *Gott lob!* the doctor said she would recover. But even if she were blind, she could earn her bread; Lina had taught her to knit so fast, so fast, faster than her sister, who had two strong eyes.'

Fred drew a long breath of relief. 'And this good Lina, where did she live? When did she die? Was she old or young?'

'She lived in the asylum. It was not quite a month since they laid her there,' and the child began to cry, and then stopped. 'Lina told me once,' she said, 'when she was quite well—before the cruel fever came—that if she died, I was never to cry for her, but to be glad, and to thank God that he had called her home. But I cannot be glad, for I have no one to teach me now, and to sing to me as she did; and I loved her; everybody loved her.'

'Was she young?' Fred asked again, with an indescribable throb of terror, which he tried to dismiss as absurd.

The little girl thought that she was old; but her mother had wept much that one so good should have died so young.

Placing a florin in her little thin hand, Fred took the white garland, hung it reverently on the cross; lifted the child, that she might look quite close at it there with her poor suffering eyes; and then he slowly walked away towards the doctor's house. When Sir George and his daughter joined him, they were in the highest possible spirits. Dr G—— had expressed a most decided and most favourable opinion: rest to the eyes, fresh air, and a simple course of treatment were alone necessary, he had said, to insure perfect recovery. Fred tendered his congratulations. 'Dr G——,' continued the baronet, 'advises me to go in a leisurely way up the Rhine, and then to return here, and let him judge what progress my case has made. I am very glad of this, for I find my little Carrie has quite set her heart upon seeing Heidelberg. Perhaps, Mr Blount, we may be fellow-travellers a little longer.'

Carrie stole a rapid glance at the handsome face before her, and then blushed, but with mortification, not pleasure, there was so little response to be read there to her father's suggestion. She turned the subject with an admirable imitation of perfect indifference. 'Oh, by the way, Mr Blount, I have something quite extraordinary to tell you! When papa went with Dr G—— into his consulting-room, I was left alone in a rather bare *salon*, with only German books on the table, which I very slightly understood, so I was compelled to take an inventory of all the furniture and prints. And what do you think I found? In a corner of the room, a bust quite strikingly, startlingly like you. I do assure you, it is your very counterpart. I wonder what great German philosopher or poet you have the honour of so strictly resembling.—But you are ill; what is the matter? What shall I do? Here is the carriage; shall we wait, or drive back at once?' and she looked into his pale face with genuine anxiety.

'It is nothing of any consequence,' gasped out Fred; 'but I cannot return with you; I must speak to this doctor. Yes; I will join you again; you shall hear.' And, having helped her into the carriage, he turned abruptly away.

'His hand is cold as death; he must be ill,' sighed the poor girl.

'Nonsense, my dear Carrie,' said her father, willing in his own immense mental relief to take cheerful views on all subjects. 'Mr Blount is much interested in all scientific matters, I know, and wants to talk some of them over with this excellent doctor. But I'll venture to predict we have him back again with

us before the evening is over.' And so Sir George and his fair daughter whirled away.

The interview between the benevolent doctor and Fred Blount was a long and a painful one. In after-years, Dr G——'s eyes would moisten whenever he referred to it. A man's transport of grief is a harrowing thing to witness, nor is it often yielded to in the presence of another man. But when he saw again that bust, on which, when he saw it last, Lina's hand had rested—on which her dying hand rested, he was told, one short month ago—when he understood, for the first time, the meaning of those few farewell words, the fulness of the love that prompted the step she had taken—when he pictured her to himself alone with strangers, blind, desolate, thinking of him to the last, while he had often struggled to blame and to forget her—he fairly broke down beneath his agony of tenderness and regret. When he was able to listen, there was much of consolation in what the doctor had to tell him, though he could not then feel, and perhaps never felt its full force. Lina had come to Dr G——, a suppliant for a life-long asylum, in return for the sum of £1500 with which she wished to endow his establishment. This was an unprecedented step; but hearing that she was an orphan, unmarried, and without any near relatives, he did not feel called upon to reject the proposition on which her mind seemed bent. Struck by her beauty and sadness, and by a refinement of manner that was the more striking, owing to the extreme simplicity of the black dress she wore, he was anxious to provide her with many comforts beyond those that could possibly fall to the share of the other inmates; but with the exception of a separate room, she insisted upon faring in every respect as they did. Some months after her arrival, the doctor had been led by a slight change of symptoms to anticipate possible recovery. During this period of suspense, he had observed a very painful excitement in his patient's mind, and he had little doubt that she injured herself by her deep depression and constant weeping. Once or twice he had heard her express a dread lest she had been precipitate, lest she had decided wrongly; but she seemed averse to enter into any fuller explanation. When all hope was over, a great serenity seemed to settle upon her. She spent less time in her own room—she kept that bust there—and began to devote herself to those around her. Having acquired, with singular rapidity, an almost unprecedented skill in the different kinds of handiwork possible to the blind, she took pleasure in teaching the less dexterous of her fellow-sufferers. Dr G—— had often marvelled at her persevering patience. Many of the children had been most deeply indebted to it. Her exquisite singing gave her a great hold upon the affections of all around her; and her influence was always used for good. She seemed to shed something of her own perfect peace and resignation on all the rest.

'You do not, then, believe that she was unhappy?' the young man asked—a strange jealousy lest she should have forgotten him mingling with his thankfulness.

The doctor did not believe that she was. He held it to be an invariable law, that benevolent and energetic exertion in the cause of others brought with it its own reward. Her face, of late years, he said, was always calm, and generally cheerful.

'Had she never revealed to him her past history?'

'Never; but she had promised to do so. Some day,' she had said, 'when I am stronger in my faith and patience, when I am resigned to all my losses—some day, you shall know all.' But that day had never come. A fever had broken out in the course of the summer amongst the children in the institution. Lina said she had no fear of infection, and she sat with some of the little creatures, soothing them, and singing to them to the last. She was the last case, and amongst the adults the only fatal one. The

fever had run very high, and from the first the doctor had had no hope. There had been a good deal of wandering, but of a happy kind. She seemed to be reunited to some one very dear. When consciousness returned, she had asked to have the bust brought to her; and even when her hand was growing cold, it wandered lovingly over the lips and brow. The doctor had little thought he should ever see the original, and had meant always to keep the bust very carefully, for the dear Lina's sake.

That evening, Sir George Trevor received a few hurried blotted lines: unforeseen circumstances had decided Mr Blount to an immediate return to England. There was temporary sadness in the pretty Carrie's heart, but nothing worse.

And Fred had had his desire of years granted—the mystery was cleared up—but he could not forget his Lina; nor, indeed, did he now wish to forget her: the thought of her sweet constancy and devoted self-sacrifice ennobled for him the whole of humanity; deepened his faith in its possibilities, stimulated his interest in its cause. To the present day, however, he believes that Lina was mistaken in her heroic resolve, and that it would have been happier for both if she had thrown herself more unreservedly upon his love. But one thing is certain: Fred Blount, as she foresaw, was not destined to succeed in the profession he had hastily chosen—he threw it up a few years after her disappearance, and devoted himself to pursuits of a more congenial nature. But he has passed his life with little effect, little enterprise, little hope. Was Lina right or wrong?

MORNING AND EVENING.

WHEN first the glorious God of Day
Flings wide his orient gates of gold,
And striding on his kingly way,
Bids Earth her varied charms unfold—
When flower-cups brim with fairy wine,
And dew-pearls catch a ruddy glow,
When song-birds wake their notes divine,
And balmy breezes softly blow—
Mead, wood, and dell, I love to pace—
And greet dear Nature face to face.

When western skies are royal red,
And Even spreads her dusky veil,
And love-lorn Luna overhead
Draws forth the tuneful nightingale:
When shepherds fold their fleecy care,
And gaily chirp the green-grass choirs,
When bat and moth whirl through the air,
And glow-worms light their elfin fires—
I love to roam o'er mead, o'er hill,
And let my fancy sport at will.

JOHN GEO. WATTS.

On Saturday, the 5th of January 1861, will be commenced in this Journal,

A STORY,

ENTITLED

THE FAMILY SCAPEGRACE.

BY JAMES PAYN,

Author of 'The Bateman Household,' &c. &c.

To be continued every week until completed.

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